1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
EH14 Sarakatsani EH14

[p. 1]

I

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

1. VLACHS

In continental Greece north of Corinth the observant traveller is soon aware of communities of Greek-speaking transhumant shepherds known as Sarakatsani (Σαρακατσάνοι, or Σαρακατσαναῖοι). In the plains it is unnecessary even to leave the main roads to see small groups of circular, domed, huts of wood and thatch, or flocks of sheep and goats guarded by shepherds dressed in rough black suits and immense goat-hair capes woven from the fleeces of their own animals. From May until the first days of November these semi-nomad shepherds graze their considerable flocks on the higher slopes of the mountains, generally 3,000–6,000 feet above sea level; during the remainder of the year they live in the coastal plains. Simple facts of climate and relief, snow on the high ground in winter, in the summer burning heat in the plains, encourage this transhumance in a geographical area physically dominated by the ranges of the Pindus massif and the southern extremity of the Rhodope mountains. Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia, and Thrace are the provinces in which they are most numerous but communities are found further south in continental Greece and some groups are established in the north of the Peloponnese and Euboea. In the whole of Greece their number, perhaps, approaches eighty thousand,[1] a population which was possibly absolutely greater a hundred years ago, but was certainly relatively more considerable as a fraction of the total inhabitants of the area.

The Greek villagers generally refer to the Sarakatsani simply as Vlachs (Βλάχοι), that is shepherds who, in step with the rhythm of the seasons, lead their animals alternately down to the plains and up to the mountains. The occupational reference of the word, Vlach,[2] is an old one, already in use during the Byzantine period.

[1] Mme Chatzimichalis arrives at a total of 81,473. Ἀγγελικὴ Χατζημιχάλη, *Σαρακατσάνοι*, Athens, 1957, vol. i, Part A, p. νβ'.

[2] See e.g. Anna Comnena, Ed. Bonn., i, p. 395. One of a number of references quoted by Mme Chatzimichalis, op. cit., vol. i, Part A, p. κ'.

1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
EH14 Sarakatsani EH14
Vlachs EH15

Byzantine period. But it may also be used, in its original and more specific sense, to describe Koutsovlachs (Κουτσοβλάχοι) an ethnic minority group speaking a romance language akin to Rumanian, or the related groups of Albanian Vlachs ('Αρβανιτοβλάχοι) who are trilingual, speaking the Koutsovlach language as their mother tongue and Greek and Albanian for political and commercial reasons. These different connotations of the word, Vlach, have led to some confusion, which has been all the greater because many Koutsovlachs lead a transhumant shepherd life, identical in its general outline with that of the Sarakatsani. To the uninitiated eye they may appear to dress alike, to build the same type of thatched hut, and many of their communities graze their flocks in areas of the Pindus mountains neighbouring on those used by the Sarakatsani. The result has been that many nineteenth-century travellers, and even some Greek observers, failed to realize the existence of the Sarakatsani and imagined that all 'nomad' shepherds were Koutsovlachs of one kind or another.

But although many Koutsovlachs are transhumant shepherds, many are not. For instance, in the eastern half of the Zagori district in Epirus, a majority of the Koutsovlach villagers make their living from timber and agriculture. Probably since the sixteenth century[3] a considerable number of Koutsovlachs have been established in their own villages in the high Pindus. They have pretensions to culture, and for generations sons of rich Koutsovlach families have been prepared for commerce, politics, and the professions. In these respects the Koutsovlachs differ from the Albanian Vlachs who, in so far as they continue to be recognized as 'Albanian', are generally concerned only with shepherding. Some of these Albanian Vlachs have grazing areas close to the Albanian frontier which until 1930 they were able to cross in their search for winter pastures.

With both these ethnic minority groups, Koutsovlachs and Albanian Vlachs, the Sarakatsani are culturally contrasted. They speak only Greek; their values, institutions, and art forms are in many respects markedly dissimilar from those of the Koutsovlachs and Albanian Vlachs. They themselves claim that the klephtic heroes Katsandonis and Karaïskakis were

[3] See A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson, *Nomads of the Balkans*, London, 1914, p. 147.

[i.e., The term "Vlachs" -- Analyst]

1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964

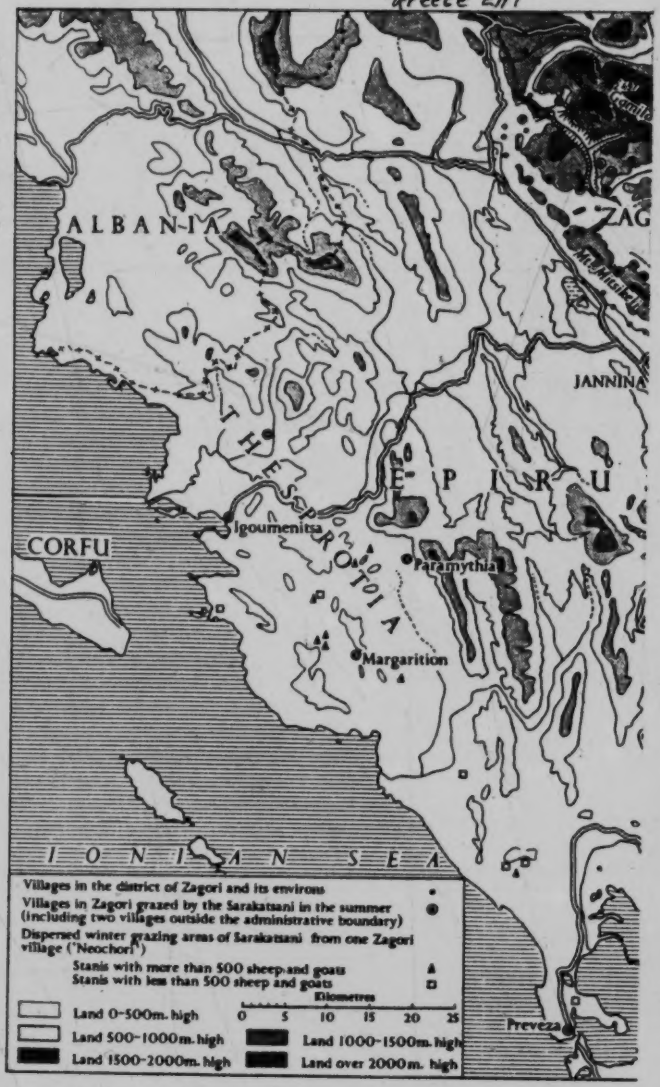
[P364-A]

EH14 Sarakatsani EH14 ●

Zagori

Greece EH1

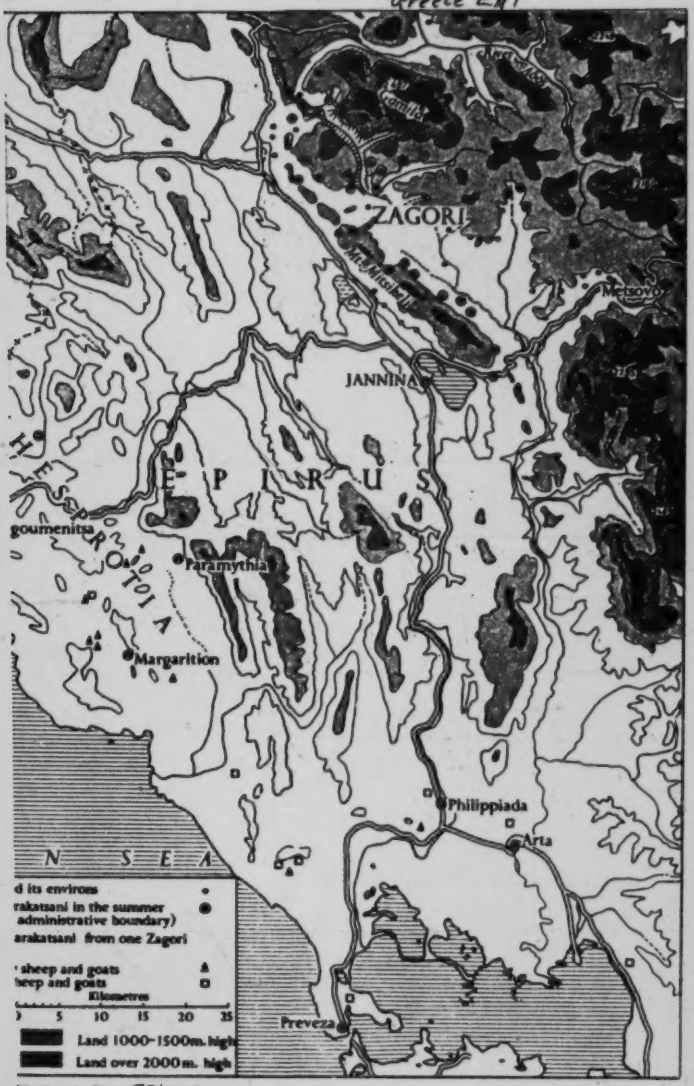
S
G
102
103
● 131
133
361
S
221
233
474



Map of the Epirus Indicating Summer and Winter Grazing Areas of the Zagori Sarakatseni

1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
EH14 Sarakatsani EH14
[P364-B]
Zagori
Greece EH1

S
G
102
103
131
133
361
S
221
233
474



Map of the Epirus
Indicating Summer and Winter Grazing Areas of the Zagori Sarakatsani

pompon covering the front of the foot. The thick soles were clouted, and the nails grated underfoot. Gazing straight ahead, he loped along the middle of the road, as though to keep as far as possible from the contaminating houses. A long shepherd's staff, whose crook was a tortuously carved wooden snake, was laid across his shoulders. His arms were looped over it in the cruciform position in which many mountaineers carry their crooks and their guns. He was a Sarakatsán. Heads turned as he passed, and the smack of cards and the clatter of backgammon counters died down for a few moments. I göt up and dogged his steps at a discreet distance.

Sarakatsáns have always filled me with awe. I first saw these primeval Greek nomads years ago when I was walking across Bulgaria, on my way to Constantinople. A gathering of beehive-shaped huts were scattered over the wintry hills slanting to the Black Sea. Brushwood folds ran up the green slopes, and thousands of shaggy black goats and sheep grazed over the rainy landscape, their heavy bronze bells filling the air with a many-toned and harmonious jangle. Here and there among them, like dark monoliths under the wheeling crows, their herdsmen leaned on their lance-long crooks; their faces were almost lost in the deep hoods of high-shouldered goat's-hair capes that

reached to the ground, capes of so coarse a weave and so stiff with rain that they looked as though their incumbents could almost step forth and leave them standing like sentry boxes. I next saw them in March the following year, when I was riding across Greek Macedonia and stayed a night in one of their smoky wigwams. Since then I had seen them again and again, all over northern Greece, in the plains in winter and in the mountains in summer, but always on the skyline or in the middle distance. True nomads, these self-appointed Ishmaels hover on the outskirts of ordinary Greek life as fleetingly as a mirage, only manifesting themselves to ordinary mortals in far-away glimpses. Suddenly, at a ravine's twist far from the scorched lowlands, one comes across their impermanent hamlets of conical huts on high ledges of the Pindus and the Rhodope mountains and in the sierras of Roumeli; and in winter, gazing down from the snows that have banished them, one can discern their clustering huts in the plains, the ascending smoke, and the slowly grazing flocks.

Every spring their beasts and their long caravans of horses, laden with all they possess, can be seen winding up into the thawed mountains, or halted around a sudden village of somber tents, to stream downhill again later to the withered autumnal plains which the rains will soon turn green. One discovers them binding lopped branches and osier twigs into the hemispherical skeletons of the huts which will house them for the season; shelters whose blackened and molting thatch will later mark where they have settled for a few months and vanished from again. Sometimes a far-off barking and the murmur of bells hint at their presence deep in the ilex woods or along a dazzling canyon where nothing stirs except, perhaps, a pair of floating eagles. Besides these rare apparitions, this fugitive community of about eighty thousand souls and of flocks amounting to several million head seems to have the gift of invisibility.

Unlike the seminomads of Greece — the Koutzovlachs and the Karagounis, who all have mountain villages from which to migrate and to which they return after their half-yearly journeys in search of winter pasture — the Sarakatsáns have nothing more solid than their abodes of wicker and rush. All of them, however, look to some range of mountains, some fold or cordillera where they have grazed their flocks for centuries of summers, as their home. Their lowland pastures are more variable, an uncertain sojourn with few claims on their allegiance. At the turn of the century the Sarakatsáns of northern Greece were the

175 221 131 nomads with the widest range of migration. The sudden cage of new frontiers which sprang up after the Balkan Wars failed to confine them, and they would fan out in autumn, from Epirus and Macedonia, all over southern Albania and across the lower marches of Serbia as far as Montenegro and Herzegovina and Bosnia and into Bulgaria, to the foothills of the great Balkans.

Those Sarakatsáns who thought of the Rhodope Mountains as their home were particularly bold in the extent of their winter wanderings. Not only would they expand northward, as they had in those first outposts which I saw years ago along the coasts of the Black Sea, but before the Hebrus River became the inviolable border of Turkey their autumnal caravans would reach Constantinople, and up would go their wigwams under the walls of Theodosius. Others would settle along the shores of the Sea of Marmara, looking out toward the islands of the Propontis. Yet others would spread over the rich green hills of the Dardanelles, and many would cross the Hellespont and pitch their camps on the plain of Troy. The boldest of all would continue their journey to the meadows of Bithynia, wintering there among the poplar trees, or pushing on further into Cappadocia as far as Caesaraea, scattering their flocks across the volcanic wildernesses around the empty rock monasteries of Ürgüb, or even as far as Iconium, the home of Jellalludin and the metropolis of the whirling dervishes.

175 131 221 101 Enormous though these journeys were, they were scarcely looked upon as expatriation; for, until the mass deracination of the 1920s, much of Asia Minor was still part of the Greek world, and even beyond its confines, ancient Greek colonies, established for thousands of years but reduced by the later tide of invading Seldjuk Turks to scattered islets of Hellenism, still survived and prospered. There the invisible frontiers of nomadism overlapped and dovetailed into those of other pastoral wanderers, the Yourouks, autochthonous Anatolian shepherds who had grazed their flocks over the hinterland of Asia Minor for centuries before the Turks arrived there and even made return migrations, now and then, as far as Macedonia. No wonder some of the aura of a fable hangs about these men.

123 So strong is this aura for me that a quarter of an hour after catching a glimpse of this isolated Sarakatsán I was sitting at the table next to him, among the smithies and harness makers, on the outskirts of the town where old artisans settled down to quiet nargilehs after quitting work. I watched him order and drink a coffee, and

3: Kabbadias--S E-4,5 (no date) 1965 EH14 Sarakatsani EH14

/xi/

101
102
114
131

• Geographical sites where our investigation was carried out [are indicated by numbered dots.]